

MRVF-98



High School Football

Mississippi streaks

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UNFORGETTABLE

Memories of record run endure in Hamilton

By Todd Kelly
tkelly@clarionledger.com

The Columbus football team won't be alone tonight in Batesville when the Falcons face the monumental task of stopping mighty South Panola from setting a state record with a 52nd consecutive victory.

Hey Columbus, the Hamilton Lions and their supporters are with you all the way.

"I'll be rooting for Columbus, just like I was rooting for Olive Branch last week," said sophomore running back/linebacker Eathan Dahlem. "It's great to

see South Panola doing what they've done, but I'd like to see the record stay around here. Most people would."

Hamilton's remarkable 51-game winning streak from 1979-83 will be erased from the record books tonight if the

three-time defending Class 5A state champions win as expected.

Yet even if the record is gone, the memories of those accomplishments under legendary coach Jimmie Moore continue to endure in the small Monroe

RECORD WINNING STREAKS

A look at the longest high school winning streaks in Mississippi history and the two teams that share it:

| School | Wins | Years |
|--------------|------|--------------|
| Hamilton | 51 | 1979-83 |
| South Panola | 51 | 2003-present |

■ Inside: Picayune Carver set bar at 50, 6D

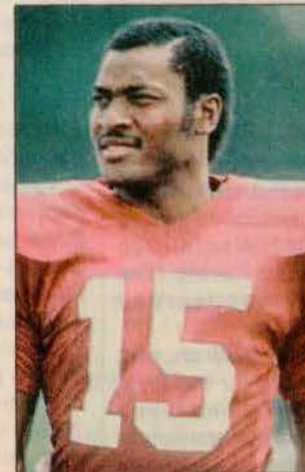
County community some 20 miles north of Columbus.

Just ask Barry Thompson, a reserve running back/defensive back during Hamilton's glory days.

Thompson is a school board member and owns Crossroads, a convenience store on the Highway 45 bypass near town. His business has a wall covered with mementos of the school's athletic highlights.

"People have been talking about (the streak) every day lately," Thompson said. "But even before that, it was proba-

See HAMILTON, 6D



File Photo/The Clarion-Ledger

Before he went on to star at Mississippi State, Don Smith contributed to Hamilton High's 51-game win streak.



Gwen Sisson/Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Hamilton High coach Ray Weeks shows off a banner commemorating his school's place in Mississippi high school football history. Hamilton's record streak, which topped the previ-

ous state mark by one, could be broken tonight, when top-ranked South Panola tries for its 52nd consecutive victory when it plays host to Columbus.

Hamilton: Lions captured 2 state crowns during streak

From 1D

bly more frequently than I realize."

The streak began with a 42-6 victory over Caledonia in the second game of 1979 when the Lions were a member of the Waterway Conference. It ended with a 35-14 loss to New Hope in the sixth game of 1983. In between, there were back-to-back Class BB state championships in 1980 and '81 when the Mississippi High School Activities Association initiated the playoff system.

"You never appreciate those things until you get older," said Don Smith, Hamilton's star quarterback from 1980-82 who went on to earn All-SEC honors for Mississippi State and play three seasons in the NFL.

"It was very special. We can look back on it and say we did something no one else in our area had ever done before. It's something I'll always cherish. I still have tapes of those games — and I watch them all the time."

Smith, who runs a hotel construction-related business in Tampa, has little trouble explaining Hamilton's success, which actually predates The Streak.

The Lions went 27-2-1 from 1976-78, including an amazing feat in 1977 that probably won't ever be topped: Hamilton went 10-0 and didn't allow a single point. The string of shutouts eventually reached 18, which would be tied for second all-time if and when the information is submitted to the National Federation of State High School Associations.

"Coach Moore was more like a father figure to us," said Smith, whose dad passed away when Don was 4 years old. "He taught us a lot about working together as a team, but it wasn't only about football. He taught us about life itself. Then all of the parents were so loving and supportive, too. Looking back, I've got to say I was blessed."

Moore, an Edinburg native, preached execution to his Hamilton teams, which seldom suited up more than two dozen players.

"We ran a lot of full-house backfield (formation), but we were about 50-50 run and pass," Thompson said. "That was ahead of its time. Coach Moore was a great motivator and a great evaluator of talent. He could determine where a kid could most be successful and most help the team."

Moore, who spent 19 seasons at Hamilton, left for nearby New

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Don Smith,
former Hamilton and
Mississippi State quarterback

Hope after the 1984 season. He spent six seasons with the Trojans before finishing his career in northwest Alabama at Colbert County, where he won 3A state championships in 1993, '94 and '96.

Moore died in 2003 from cancer, but his legacy at Hamilton remains strong. The field is named in his honor and third-year Lions coach Ray Weeks has embraced the proud tradition.

Hamilton (4-2) plays at unbeaten East Webster (6-0) tonight in a Region 1-1A game, looking to gain ground for a run to the postseason, where the program hasn't advanced beyond the second round of the playoffs for the first time since the glory days.

"We've got a lot of kids coming through now whose daddies played for those teams, so that streak means a lot to them," said Weeks, who has honored Hamilton's past championship teams during halftime of home games. "This is a small community so you don't get a lot of recognition a lot of times. I think it helps these kids understand what you can accomplish with hard work."

Which might explain last week in Hamilton. Even though there were cheers when Olive Branch's 7-6 halftime lead over South Panola was announced over the PA, nobody in Mississippi knows any better how much the Tigers have truly achieved.

For his part, Weeks is ~~comain~~ he'll be provided ~~searc~~ updates from ~~Ratoor~~ again tonight.

"If South Panola breaks it, great for them and their kids," Weeks said. "To win that many in a row, especially in 5A, is an unbelievable accomplishment. Hamilton will always have their streak. Who knows? Maybe it'll motivate our kids to start another streak of our own."

TRACKING HAMILTON'S STREAK

1979

| Opponent | Score |
|--------------|-------|
| Caledonia | 42-6 |
| Mooreville | 22-0 |
| Biggersville | 22-0 |
| Smithville | 52-0 |
| Mantachie | 75-0 |
| Burnsville | 49-0 |
| Tishomingo | 46-0 |
| Hatley | 24-20 |
| Belmont | 14-8 |

1980

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Caledonia | 34-6 |
| Ackerman | 20-0 |
| Mooreville | 46-0 |
| Biggersville | 32-20 |
| Hatley | 47-0 |
| Smithville | 49-0 |
| Mantachie | 36-6 |
| Burnsville | 49-6 |
| Tishomingo | 32-12 |
| Belmont | 8-2 |
| Aberdeen | 20-6 |

1981

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Caledonia | 32-0 |
| Ackerman | 18-7 |
| Baldwyn | 22-6 |
| Mooreville | 37-0 |
| Hatley | 32-7 |
| Biggersville | 28-6 |

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Belmont | 40-12 |
| Okolona | 21-14 |
| Smithville | 44-6 |
| Aberdeen | 21-0 |
| *Calhoun City | 27-14 |
| *Nugent Center | 21-0 |
| *Taylorsville | 35-6 |

1982

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| Caledonia | 26-3 |
| Pickens Co., Ala. | 21-0 |
| Baldwyn | 28-16 |
| Mooreville | 38-0 |
| Hatley | 39-7 |
| Biggersville | 31-14 |
| Belmont | 26-8 |
| Okolona | 27-7 |
| Smithville | 40-6 |
| Aberdeen | 33-14 |
| *O'Bannon | 41-8 |
| *Falkner | 35-0 |
| *Decatur | 32-14 |

1983

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| Caledonia | 33-6 |
| Pickens Co., Ala. | 14-0 |
| Hatley | 19-13 |
| Mooreville | 28-6 |
| Sand Hill | 37-6 |

* — Class BB playoffs

— compiled by Kenneth Kennedy